

Nairobi: one seen on 14-18 October 1974 (D.A. Turner).
 Kampala: singles seen on 29 September 1966 (D.J. Pearson) and 24 September 1968 (R. Frankum), adult male seen on 26 February 1968 and female ringed on 7 September 1970 (R. Frankum).
 Kabalega Falls National Park: single adult males seen at Paraa and Chobe in March 1969 (R. Wheeler, A. Ziegler).
 Masindi: female collected on 16 September 1906 (Chapin 1953).
 Toro: females collected on 2 February and 3 March (Jackson 1938).
 Rwenzori National Park: one ringed on 5 March 1971 (M.P.L. Fogden).
 Mbarara: adult male seen in March 1970 (G.N. Harrington).

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- P.L. Britton, Box 90163, Mombasa. Received 11 November 1979

ARABIAN GOLDEN SPARROWS *PASSER EUCHLORUS* IN SOMALIA AND DJIBOUTI The Arabian Golden Sparrow *Passer euchlorus* has had an unstable taxonomic history. Originally described as *Auripasser euchlorus*, it was later regarded by White (1963) as a subspecies of *Passer luteus*. Subsequently, Hall & Moreau (1970) again raised it to specific status, and regarded it and two other atypical sparrows, *P. luteus* and *eminibey*, as being divergent members of a superspecies.

Passer euchlorus is shown by Hall & Moreau (1970) to have a very restricted range in southwestern Arabia and extreme northwestern Somalia; however, these authors indicate that it may not have survived on the Somali coast, where it was at one time established. This statement is probably based largely on the fact that Meinertzhagen (1954) was unable to find the bird there in 1949. Although *P. euchlorus* and *P. luteus* are allopatric, it will be shown here that their distributions are in even closer proximity than Hall & Moreau show on

their map. We shall also provide evidence that *P. euchlorus* is still present and breeding on the African continent, and that its range is probably much the same as it was formerly.

Previous observations The first *P. euchlorus* in Africa were found by Erlanger (1907), who collected three males and a female at Zeila (11°21'N, 43°28'E) on 10 January 1900, when he saw them in flocks of 20-30. Archer & Godman (1961) found many hundreds of pairs breeding in thorn trees in the irrigated gardens at Takoshe (11°20'N, 43°24'E) in mid-May 1922, but stated that they did not come near the town of Zeila only 8 km away. On 14 May most nests contained young, or highly incubated eggs. Archer also found a breeding colony further south-east along the coast at Gerih (= Lubba Gerih at 10°24'N, 44°37'E), east of Bulhar. No date is given for this, and we are unable to trace any other records.

Recent observations We made a special quest for *P. euclorus* in May 1979, visiting both Zeila and Takoshe and travelling along the coast south-eastwards to Berbera. From 9-12 May we saw four small flocks, each numbering 12-25 birds, at Takoshe and Zeila and between the two localities. We found no trace of breeding there, although it was very likely taking place, for a male collected on 12th had advanced gonads (testes: 10 mm). Further east, at Sabawanak (10°33'N, 44°08'E), there was a party of six birds next day. Later, on 13th, at 21 km east of Bulhar, we came across four more, and after a further 2 km found at least 100 pairs nesting in acacias in a very arid area of coastal dunes at Lubba Gerih (see above). We checked about 40 nests and although all were lined, and both displaying males and females were present, no eggs had been laid. Three males at this site had fully developed testes of 10, 11 and 11 mm, and the largest follicle of a female was 7.5 mm in diameter.

Several years earlier, one of us (JSA) found *P. euchlorus* in Djibouti, where there were 15 in *Stereospermum*-like trees near the airport (11°33'N, 43°09'E) on 27 December 1975, when several of the males were singing. This site is only about 36 km north-west of Takoshe.

Discussion The Arabian Golden Sparrow never seems to have been branded as a pest, as has *P. luteus* across the Sahel zone of Africa, although JSA saw them in numbers large enough to cause damage to small-grain cereals on the coastal plain south of Al Hodeida (14°50'N, 42°58'E), Yemen, in January 1976. On the African side their occurrences in Djibouti and at Sabawanak are new, but these sites are within, or close to, their coastal range as plotted by Erlanger, and Archer & Godman. Certainly there is no indication that their range, unlike that of the Somali Sparrow *P. castanopterus* (Ash, Miskell & Murshid, in prep.), is increasing; nor that there has been any major change in their abundance. This suggests that northern Somalia is at the southern edge of their area of 'ecological suitability', and that they are unlikely to develop as a potential pest to agricultural crops further south. The fact that several other observers, notably Meinertzhagen (1954), R.G. Allan (in litt.) and M.H. Barre (pers. comm.) did not see them on visits within their Somalia range, may only indicate that they are nomadic outside the breeding season, and are then far less easy to see.

Hall & Moreau (1970) show that the gap in the distribution of *P. luteus* at its most easterly point in Eritrea is only some 650 km away from the nearest *P. euchlorus* in Africa. This gap can be reduced considerably now. *Passer luteus* was common in 1973-1977 along the Awash River in Ethiopia at Aseita (11°33'N, 41°26'E) (JSA, pers. obs.), to where it may have spread in recent years, following agricultural development under irrigation. Only one is cited from that area in Hill, Hill, Santi & Robertson (1970), in the period 1966-1969. It may be that *P. luteus* is a more adaptable species, and thus more likely

to take advantage of a new situation. A fascinating genetic situation would arise should the two populations ever come together.

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DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHESTNUT-BANDED SANDPLOVER *CHARADRIUS PALLIDUS* IN TANZANIA
The Chestnut-banded Sandplover *Charadrius pallidus*, is recorded in Tanzania from Lakes Natron and Manyara and from Lake Magadi in Ngorongoro Crater.

I recently found the species in two more localities, both extending the known distribution southwards in East Africa. On 1 November 1978 I found a small number of *C. pallidus* at Ilinde (5°56'S, 35°31'E), a small soda lake near Dodoma. The birds were feeding on the edge of a small pool of water alongside the more numerous Kittlitz's Sandplover *C. pecuarius*. At this time the lake was almost completely dry, with only two small pools of water remaining.

The heavy rains during the early months of 1979, and also a severe petrol shortage, precluded further visits to Ilinde until 6 June 1979, when I found the water level very high, leaving no exposed areas of soda; I was not too surprised when I failed to locate any *C. pallidus*. It was not until 8 July, when the water level had dropped a little, that I again found a few birds at the lake. On this visit I found both Blacksmith Plovers *Vanellus armatus* and Kittlitz's Sandpipers breeding, but no nests of *C. pallidus*. On 8 August 1979 I finally found a nest of *C. pallidus*. It was situated 30m from the water's edge, but adjacent to a wet patch of soda. The two eggs appeared to have been laid in a mammal's footprint, and there appeared to be no nest decoration. The eggs were stained with soda, but buffy in colour with black blotches. On subsequent visits I found two pairs of chicks with adults, but no more nest sites.

On 10 November 1979 I located *C. pallidus* rather further south. These birds were feeding with a group of *C. pecuarius* at the southeastern corner of Bahi Swamp (6°14'S, 35°18'E).

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